

Testimony in support of HB-6355

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, ranking members Kissel and Fishbein and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am from Manchester and a supporter of CT Against Gun Violence. I am retired, a community volunteer and the mother of two adult children.

I am submitting this testimony because I believe that with second amendment rights come common-sense second amendment protections for both individuals and society at large. We live in a country where every day **more than 100 Americans are killed with guns and more than 230 are shot and wounded**. (Everytown Research and Policy). And we know full well that the violence inflicted by guns in the wrong hands goes far beyond those who are killed or injured. We have become a nation of gun-violence witnesses, mourners and innocent citizens living in fear of the next mass shooting event.

ERPOs are effective because even though individuals may legally possess guns, they can be dangerous to themselves or others. Background checks are a point-in-time measure that can't detect dangers that family members, friends and co-workers can sense. Individuals considering suicide often give some sign of their intentions. And an FBI study of the pre-attack behaviors of active shooters found, on average, that they displayed four to five observable and concerning behaviors that suggested the possibility of violent intentions.

In addition, please consider that there is now an epidemic of young people who are experiencing serious mental health challenges (especially during this pandemic) and for whom suicidal ideation coupled with easy gun access is a tremendous risk. In fact, nearly two-thirds of American gun deaths are suicides, with the gun suicide rate in the US ten times that of other high-income countries. (An even more staggering statistic: the US gun homicide rate is 25 times that of other high-income countries!) (Everytown Research and Policy).

Strengthening Connecticut's ERPO law is the least we can do to stem the madness that comes with America's proliferation of firearms. In particular, when the protection order expires, it should be a requirement that the subject is no longer at risk of violence before the firearms are returned. That is not the case now. And another modification to this law -- allowing family members to petition the court directly, as 12 other states do -- would provide an alternative means of initiating the process for people who are reluctant to involve law enforcement at the outset, because they fear law enforcement or are concerned about stigmatizing the gun owner as a criminal.

For all of these reasons, I urge you to favorably report HB-6355 out of committee so that the General Assembly can vote to strengthen our Extreme Risk Protection law and make it work harder to prevent firearm suicide and homicide. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Marcie LaBelle

Manchester, CT